



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
DESERT DISCOVERY CENTER PHASE III FEASIBILITY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2013

**GRANITE REEF SENIOR CENTER, ROOM 10
1700 NORTH GRANITE REEF ROAD
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA 85257
MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Nolan, Chair
Patrick Weeks, Vice Chair
Ken Travous

ABSENT: Nancy Dallett

STAFF: Kroy Ekblaw
Yvonne Massman
Joe Padilla

GUESTS: John Sather
Rick Pfannenstiel
Con Englehorn

1. Call to Order

Chair Nolan called the meeting of the Desert Discovery Center Phase III Feasibility Committee to order at 8:38 a.m.

2. Roll Call

A formal roll call confirmed a quorum of members present as stated above.

3. Approval of Minutes

- February 22, 2012 Meeting

COMMITTEE MEMBER WEEKS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 22, 2012 MEETING AS PRESENTED. COMMITTEE MEMBER TRAVOUS SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF THREE (3) TO ZERO (0). COMMITTEE MEMBER DALLETT WAS ABSENT.

- February 12, 2013 Meeting

COMMITTEE MEMBER TRAVOUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 12, 2013 MEETING AS PRESENTED. COMMITTEE MEMBER WEEKS SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF THREE (3) TO ZERO (0). COMMITTEE MEMBER DALLETT WAS ABSENT.

4. Ethics Training

The Committee received their annual ethics refresher prior to the meeting.

5. DDC III Committee Annual Report

COMMITTEE MEMBER WEEKS MOVED TO APPROVE THE DDC PHASE III COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT AS PRESENTED. COMMITTEE MEMBER TRAVOUS SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF THREE (3) TO ZERO (0). COMMITTEE MEMBER DALLETT WAS ABSENT.

6. Alternative Locations

- Site Options

Chair Nolan noted the concerns raised by some members of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission (MSPC) about situating the DDC inside the Preserve, which they feel would conflict with the Preserve Ordinance. Kroy Ekblaw explained how the Gateway area came to be chosen as the proposed site for the DDC. Initially it was to have been on land adjacent to Pinnacle Peak Park, but the focus over time has evolved to the Gateway vicinity. Even though this site was the subject of the Phase II Study, it has never been formally approved by City Council as the official location. The Gateway benefits from exposure to Thompson Peak Parkway and Bell Road.

Committee Member Travous asked whether any part of the infrastructure built at the Gateway in recent years was intended for the DDC. Mr. Ekblaw explained that the parking, Gateway building, and trails are all stand-alone. A prior analysis suggested that the trailhead alone requires between 300 and 500 parking stalls. A small visitor center would probably not need any additional parking, but a destination attraction clearly would.

Vice Chair Weeks stated the City paid for the Phase II Study to develop a business model and a vision that worked at the Gateway site. Substantial issues have to be addressed with any proposal to change locations. Chair Nolan questioned whether opposition to the Gateway could become an impediment to the private management firm, and whether a less controversial site would make it more attractive to a potential partner.

Mr. Ekblaw said some of the proposed alternatives, such as downtown and Papago Park, would require completely different analysis, but much of the Study II work would

still apply. The Gateway might well be the strongest site, but that has not been formally determined yet. Next week's MSPC meeting should help define their concerns. If the Committee so directs, staff could arrange for an evaluation of alternate sites. ConsultEcon could also provide an analysis of how a move would affect the business plan. Neither study would be as extensive as the Phase II Study. Alternate sites include the corner of Thompson Peak and Bell, 94th Street and Bell, the old Reata Pass Steakhouse property, the original site adjacent to Pinnacle Peak Park, an unacquired parcel near Pima and Dynamite immediately adjacent to the Preserve, Papago Park, and downtown Scottsdale.

Chair Nolan noted that the pursuit of any of the three unacquired parcels would introduce new complications. Mr. Ekblaw said the potential exists to ask voters to remove land from the Preserve for the DDC, but it has not been pursued. The City has instead proposed amending the Preserve Ordinance to allow a special bubble to exist within the Preserve for the DDC. The opposition is comfortable with the concept of the DDC; they just do not want it in the Preserve.

Committee Member Travous felt that visitors would need easy access to the desert if they were to truly discover it. Vice Chair Weeks felt that any of the locations on the Preserve would face the same hurdles as the Gateway area does. Visitation would drop the further people would have to go. He suggested the Committee focus on the 80 acres of State Land, and the Pima and Dynamite location as the two primary options. Chair Nolan agreed, and requested that the study compare the pros and cons of each site in relation to the Gateway.

Mr. Ekblaw explained that the closest residential neighborhood to the 80-acre site is to the north side. The DDC itself would likely require less than 20 acres. The site has guaranteed open space in the wash corridor, and immediate proximity to a trail connecting to the Preserve. Vice Chair Weeks noted that the site analysis should consider the traffic impact of the DDC on surrounding areas. The Commission discussed the use of the Desert Discovery Center name.

- Analysis Criteria

Mr. Ekblaw stated that the City has prepared a scope of work for the evaluation. ConsultEcon will build off the Phase II Study to review the new locations in light of the business and marketing plans. Chair Nolan requested that the comparison be made against the latest conservative business model.

7. Possible Partners

Mr. Ekblaw reported that staff is developing a list of possible academic partners. Chair Nolan felt that it should be up to the private operator, not the City, to make partnership decisions. Committee Member Travous queried why the City received no bidders on the RFP. Mr. Ekblaw explained that private donors were reluctant to commit without assurances of City funding. Timing issues were also involved.

8. Other Project Elements to Consider

Chair Nolan said the new site analysis might reveal some additional cost issues, and affect project size and scope. Vice Chair Weeks felt it would be good to have an ongoing conversation on phasing.

9. Staff and Committee Updates (A.R.S. 38-431.02(K))

Mr. Ekblaw targeted next week for the Committee's tour of potential sites, and the end of March to review progress on the evaluation.

10. Public Comment (A.R.S. 38-431.02(K))

There were no public comments.

11. Identification of Future Agenda Items

No further agenda items were proposed.

12. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the Committee meeting adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

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